

Top Secret

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Friday 25 November 1977

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Friday, 25 November 1977.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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MIDDLE EAST: Further Reactions

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[] The Israeli public, while still euphoric over Egyptian President Sadat's visit, seems disappointed that its own government did not rise to the occasion and match Sadat's gesture. As a result, the government is on the spot to respond soon in some way that will further boost peace efforts. On the Arab side, the Saudis reportedly will quietly support Sadat's initiative, and moderates within the Palestine Liberation Organization apparently are attempting to prevent the PLO stand from being overly harsh.

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[] Most Israelis agree that it is their move, but they appear uncertain and divided over what Prime Minister Begin could have given Sadat before the Egyptian President departed. It is generally conceded that Begin could not have suddenly changed his hard-line position on substantive matters, but his performance has raised doubts anew about his capacity to overcome past ideological convictions and deal with the new situation.

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[] A cleavage may already be developing between hard-liners, on the one hand, and most of the public, the Israeli press, the opposition Labor Party, and even some moderates within the governing coalition on the other over the direction Israel should take. The moderates are urging the government to make some appropriate concession that will give new momentum to reconvening the Geneva conference.

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[] The hard-liners, however, seem even less convinced of the value of a Middle East peace conference. While Israeli hawks are now convinced that Sadat desires peace, the reaction of Syria, the Palestinians, and other Arabs to the visit has reconfirmed the view of many hard-liners that--apart from Egypt--none of the other Arabs are ready to accept Israel and make real peace. As a result, they believe Begin should concentrate on bilateral negotiations with Egypt.

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[] We do not know what Sadat and Begin discussed privately, nor do we have any clues as to how the Begin government intends to react. Foreign Minister Dayan, presumably with Begin's approval, has stressed the need for Israel to reexamine its negotiating position. But he has also interjected a note of caution against expecting a quick solution.

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[] Begin and Dayan, however, may be playing for time to let passions subside in Israel while they devise a strategy and tactics for dealing with Sadat's gambit. They undoubtedly hope to channel and regain a measure of control over the pace and direction of negotiations.

[] The PLO continues to be strongly critical of Sadat's trip, but PLO chief Yasir Arafat and his moderate colleagues apparently are trying to preserve their political options by not attacking Sadat personally. The PLO's negative position is due at least in part to the influence of militants within the organization as well as to Syrian, Iraqi, and Libyan pressures.

[] The Palestinian reaction, such as the speech delivered at the UN on Wednesday by the PLO's observer, has generally been somewhat milder than that of Syria and other opponents of Sadat's initiative.

[] Arafat probably is apprehensive that Sadat might be willing to accept a settlement with Israel that does not completely satisfy Palestinian demands, but he appears to be hedging against the possibility that Sadat's trip will lead to movement toward an acceptable solution to the Arab-Israeli problem. Arafat realizes he may need Egypt's support at some future date.

[] Romania yesterday responded favorably to Sadat's visit to Israel in a lengthy editorial in *Scinteia*, the official party newspaper. The editorial termed the trip a practical move "offering a way out of a deadlock."

[] The Romanians, who have long prided themselves for maintaining good relations with both Israel and the Arabs, are thus taking a stand at variance with handling of the visit by the USSR and other Warsaw Pack members. The Soviets have made efforts to discredit Sadat, but their coverage of his trip has generally been indirect and has not appeared prominently in their most authoritative publications. []

ITALY: Sicilian Political Deal

[] At the invitation of the local Christian Democrats, Italy's Communists appear to have taken a small but significant step toward participation in the regional government in Sicily.

The move, which probably had the approval of both parties' national headquarters, will have implications for interparty cooperation in other regions as well as the national level.

25X1 [] Italy's 20 regional governments have in recent years provided an arena in which the Communists and Christian Democrats have experimented with new forms of cooperation in an atmosphere less highly charged than Rome's. Such experiments have gone farthest in Sicily and Lombardy, where Christian Democratic led administrations began formally negotiating key government programs with the Communists long before the national government did so last summer.

25X1 [] Until now, however, the Communists--who govern six of the 20 regions in alliance with the Socialists--were unable to draw the local Christian Democrats into the direct collaboration envisaged in party chief Berlinguer's "historic compromise" proposal.

25X1 [] An important step in that direction was taken this week in Sicily when the Christian Democrats invited the Communists to become part of the majority in the regional assembly--that is, to vote routinely with the government rather than abstaining. This step is significant in Italian terms; association with a government's legislative majority has traditionally been viewed as the dividing line between governing parties and those in the opposition.

25X1 [] The Communists place high priority on achieving such status in the national government and in localities where the Christian Democrats govern. They appear to view it as a necessary stepping stone to an actual coalition with the Christian Democrats.

25X1 [] The Sicilian Christian Democrats say their move was necessary to make the Communists "co-responsible" for the unpopular decisions needed to cope with the island's severe economic and social problems. They argue that the Communists will no longer be able to claim both shadow participation in the government and opposition status.

25X1 [] Some politicians in Rome have been urging a similar step at the national level for the same reasons. National Christian Democratic leaders may thus regard the Sicilian situation

as a test case. In any event, they probably approved the move in advance; Sicily's Christian Democrats do not normally act autonomously in matters of such importance.

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RHODESIA: Settlement Proposal

//Rhodesian Prime Minister Smith announced yesterday that he will seek an independent settlement with black nationalist leaders inside Rhodesia. He stated that preparations for formal negotiations to be held in Salisbury could begin as early as next week.//

//Smith implied that nationalist leaders Bishop Abel Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole as well as tribal leaders would participate in the negotiations. Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, leaders of the nationalist Patriotic Front, would be excluded from the talks. Negotiations would focus on "one-man, one-vote" arrangements and achieving safeguards for the political participation of whites.//

//Both Muzorewa and Sithole had been expecting such a statement from Smith. Any negotiations, however, are likely to be protracted. The nationalists will attempt to push Smith closer to the UK-US proposals in order to gain international acceptance for a deal with him. Smith too, realizes the importance of international approval and may be willing to make political concessions in order to maintain military and economic control for the whites.

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YUGOSLAVIA: Liberals Regrouping

25X1 [] *Proponents of political democratization in Yugoslavia are again pressing their programs in the media with the intention of influencing preparations for the party congress next May. Entrenched conservatives will fight back.*

25X1 [] Over the past few months, several press articles have cautiously advocated greater grass-roots participation in the political process. The boldest proposal to date appeared in the popular news weekly *NIN* on Sunday in an interview with Dusan Bilandzic, a professor at Zagreb University and a Central Committee member. He attacked the ruling style of the hardline establishment and argued that the 1971 "state of emergency" left an authoritarian legacy that continues to block progress. He called for a greater degree of "pluralism," an open flow of information, and freedom of expression.

25X1 [] These statements go beyond the party line on reforms. Last June, Edvard Kardelj, the likely candidate to succeed President Tito as party leader, called for a cautious reassessment of the political system. Kardelj's tack, although in some respects similar to Bilandzic's, ruled out democracy as practiced in the West and pluralist theories advocated by the Euro-communists.

25X1 [] Having opened the discussion of reforms, Kardelj probably will be pressed by conservatives to set limits on the debate. Party secretary Todo Kurtovic, a stern disciplinarian in charge of press matters, issued a warning last week about new forms of "ultra-radicalism" and urged the party to limit "inconsistencies" in its ranks. Bilandzic has privately told the US chief of mission in Zagreb that, while anticipating no drastic moves, he is uncertain about the regime's reaction to his statements. []

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USSR: Dissidents and Human Rights

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[REDACTED] *The wife of Soviet dissident spokesman Andrey Sakharov has returned to Moscow after Soviet authorities refused to extend the visa that enabled her to go to Italy in September for eye surgery. Some dissidents fear that the Soviets will take some action against her, presumably because of her "political activity" while abroad.*

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[REDACTED] Mrs. Sakharov was very articulate on various human rights issues while in Italy. She had been equally vocal during her first trip to Italy for medical purposes in the fall of 1975, and when she accepted Sakharov's Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in December 1975.

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[REDACTED] The Soviets, possibly with an eye on the CSCE conference in Belgrade, may have wanted Mrs. Sakharov out of Italy before a four-day "Sakharov hearing" began in Rome. This meeting is designed to focus attention on the current state of human

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rights in the USSR. The meeting, organized by a Copenhagen-based group, is slated to bring together a number of prominent Soviet exiles. As he did when the first such meeting was held in Copenhagen in October 1975, Sakharov has authorized the use of his name and may send a personal message.

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Dissidents in Moscow will consider Mrs. Sakharov's "recall" as another in the recent series of harassing moves directed at Sakharov. Sakharov continues to maintain that he wishes to stay in Moscow, but speculation persists that the Soviets are looking for ways to maneuver him out of the country.

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SOMALIA-ETHIOPIA: Harar Fighting

Somali insurgents claim they have captured the key Ethiopian stronghold of Harar, according to press reports from Mogadiscio. While we have no confirmation that Harar has fallen, sources of the US Embassy in Addis Ababa reported on Wednesday that the fighting had reached the city's outskirts.

The reports say the insurgents have driven the Ethiopian defenders to new positions several kilometers northwest of the town. The Somalis also claim to have cut the road between Harar and Dire Dawa, the other major Ethiopian garrison in the northern Ogaden.

Somali forces began their current drive to capture Harar nearly two weeks ago when insurgents and heavily equipped regulars launched attacks on Ethiopian positions south and east of the city.

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SAHEL: Appeal for Drought Relief

A late and irregular rainy season this year in parts of the Sahel has created food shortages reminiscent of the 1968-1973 drought. The current drought, however, is not as

widespread. The countries most critically affected are Mauritania, Gambia, Cape Verde, Senegal, and parts of Mali and Upper Volta.

25X1 [] Rainfall in the western Sahel averaged only 25 to 50 percent of normal through most of the June-September rainy season. Farther east, in Niger and parts of Chad, the situation is better because rains reached 50 to 75 percent of normal by September.

25X1 [] The actual extent of food shortages is uncertain. The drought-affected countries have appealed for 500,000 metric tons of grain between now and next October to cover the 1977-78 harvest deficit. The amount requested is nearly as much as was delivered during 1972-73, the worst years of the last drought, and twice the deficit estimated by the UN in September.

25X1 [] A multidonor assessment team has been organized by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization to determine individual country requirements. Relief operations have already begun bringing food shipments to ports in Senegal and Mauritania for overland distribution. In addition, emergency assistance has been requested for the rescue of livestock and rebuilding of seed stocks. []

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BRIEFS

USSR

25X1 [] //The number of Soviet Jews receiving exit permits to emigrate to Israel this year by mid-November exceeded the total for all of 1976. The Dutch Embassy in Moscow, which handles Israeli interests there, issued 689 entry visas during the first half of the month, which brought this year's total to 14,359--about 250 more than it issued last year.//

25X1 [] //Significantly more exit permits were granted in August than during a similar period in 1976. The Soviets appeared at that time to be both preparing a case for the follow on Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Belgrade and signaling to the US their desire for improved relations. []

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Japan

25X1 [] Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda may name a new cabinet as early as this weekend, following adjournment of the Diet today. The present cabinet has been in office for about a year, and a shift at this time is normal practice. It was widely anticipated that Fukuda would name a new cabinet in December, and the Prime Minister may be moving somewhat sooner in order to facilitate decisions on easing Tokyo's trade problems with the US. []

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Yugoslavia

25X1 [] Yugoslav dissident author Mihajlo Mihajlov, currently serving a seven-year sentence for spreading hostile propaganda against the state, will be among those released this weekend under a major amnesty. The amnesty, issued in observance of President Tito's proclamation of the country as a Communist state in 1943, affects 723 persons, 218 of them, including Mihajlov, "political criminals." Some of these are serving sentences, while others have been accused of crimes but not yet convicted. []

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Spain-UK

25X1 []//Spanish Foreign Minister Oreja and British Foreign Secretary Owen--who were both in Strasbourg for the Council of Europe session on the admission of Spain--met for exploratory talks on the thorny issue of Gibraltar's sovereignty.//

25X1 []//For the first time, Spain agreed to allow representatives from Gibraltar to participate as part of the British delegation. This may have been the first small step toward breaking the long impasse over the territory. The joint communique issued after the talks said that they were held in a "friendly, cooperative, and constructive atmosphere."//

25X1 []//London insists that any solution to the dispute with Spain be approved by a majority of Gibraltarians. In 1967, the Gibraltarians voted overwhelmingly to remain British, but the situation has evolved considerably since then. British officials have noted that the new Spanish Government is showing more sensitivity to the wishes of the Gibraltarians and their determination to preserve a separate identity.//

25X1 [] //The UK continues to assert, however, that substantive negotiations cannot be opened with Spain until the blockade--imposed by Franco in 1969--is lifted. The Spanish would lose face if the barriers were lifted without any concessions from the British. []

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Spain-Portugal

25X1 [] The Friendship and Cooperation Treaty signed on Tuesday by Spain and Portugal is a symbolic mark of the closer relations between the two recently democratized Iberian neighbors. The agreement, however, could in time serve as a basis for significantly closer ties.

25X1 [] The treaty will be valid for 10 years. It repeals and replaces the Iberian Pact--a nonaggression agreement first signed in 1939--that had become a relic of the totalitarian past.

25X1 [] With an eye toward gaining eventual membership in the EC, Spain and Portugal agreed to "coordinate" their programs in industry, trade, mineral exploitation, agriculture, fishing, transportation, tourism, and development of their common border region. The two countries also agreed to grant each other's exports most-favored-nation treatment.

25X1 [] The treaty ther provides for a renewal of military consultations and joint exercises and for numerous cultural and scientific exchanges. A Council for Spanish-Portuguese Cooperation will be set up to monitor the implementation of the treaty. []

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